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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Housekeepers' Chat Tues., Feb. 28, 1928

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "We Buy a Rug for the Dining Room." Information, including recipe, from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Bulletin available: "Floors and Floor Coverings."

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I read an interesting article the other day, written by a topnotch carpet and rug salesman, who tells what he thinks about his woman customers. If you want to know how rug salesmen size us up, listen to this:

"Experience is a great teacher," writes the salesman. "You meet all kinds of women in this job ... A man will come in and ask to see some rugs .... I'll only have to turn over the pile once. He makes a quick decision, and the sale is concluded.

"With a woman customer, it is very different. In the first place, you have to draw out, in as courteous a manner as possible, the size and color rug she desires. It is a ten to one shot that she does not know the difference between an Axminster, Velvet, Wilton, or Saxony, and it may be a difficult task to find out just what grade rug she intends to buy. As I ask the simple little questions about size, grade, or color, I am sizing her up. Trying to determine what type she is -- the friendly type, which will tell you all you want to know, and more, or the stiff, close-mouth type that seems to say 'Go ahead -- sell me a rug.'

"I find that selling the friendly type is a pleasure. I endeavor to find a rug that will give her greater service, and fit in with her scheme of decoration.

"I have found that home decoration has a wide interest with the reserved type of woman...If she is interested in decoration, I find out the predominating color of the walls, draperies, and upholstery in her room; the kind of a room, bedroom, living room, dining room, or library. Then I turn up the rugs I believe most desirable. It may be a Wilton, a Saxony, high pile Wilton, or an Axminster, but it will carry a predominance of harmonizing color.

". . . Naturally knowing the room far better than I, she is in a position to better judge the pattern and color -- yet my suggestions of color harmony are generally followed."

That's all of the article I'll read. I'm sorry the salesman neglected to sign his name, because I'd like to meet him. If he's as courteous and friendly as he claims to be, I'd probably buy a rug from him, and let him give me advice as to pattern and color, and quality.

I sometimes wonder whether a salesman realizes that buying a living room or dining room rug, or even a kitchen linoleum, is an important event in most families. It takes a long time to save enough money to buy a good rug, or a good kitchen linoleum, and naturally, we want to get our money's worth, when we buy.

As you know, many of the largest stores now maintain a staff of interior decorators who are at the service of people who buy rugs, and other furnishings. Other stores employ rug salesmen who have had special training in decoration, and who can give expert advice on home furnishing.

However, since not all of us are fortunate enough to live near a large furniture store, which employs salesmen who can give reliable advice, it is up to us to learn something about rugs, before we buy. The common types of rugs and carpets are Ingrain, Brussels, Wilton, Velvet, and Axminster. The best information I could find on rugs and carpets is in the bulletin I mentioned yesterday, called "Floors and Floor Coverings." If you are considering the purchase of a floor-covering of any kind, I suggest that you send for this bulletin.

You may be interested in what I learned about oriental rugs. Oriental rugs are those woven in one piece, on hand looms, in eastern countries. As a whole, they are the most beautiful and sought after of all floor coverings. They have a warp and filling of linen, hemp, or wool, and a pile of tufts of woolen yarn, or occasionally silk yarn, knotted into the warp by hand, and evened with scissors. Weaving rugs in this way, by hand, takes a long time, and a great deal of skill. Oriental rugs reach their greatest beauty and value after they have lain on the floor for a long time, and been polished by the wear of oriental sandals. The value of a genuine oriental rug depends on the design, the fastness of the color, the compactness and evenness of the weave, the number of knots to the square inch, and the care that has been taken of it. From our point of view, the value of an oriental rug depends also on whether the rug harmonizes with the other furnishings in our homes.

Some years ago, beautiful old rugs could be bought at fairly reasonable prices, but during recent years, the demand has been so great, that good genuine oriental rugs are out of reach of all except those who can afford to pay high prices. To meet the demand, many rugs are now being woven in oriental countries, in some cases under factory conditions, in imitation of the antiques. These do not have the quality that comes with age and wear, but if well made, they are worth buying, and will give good service. A rug which is especially popular just now is the modern Chinese rug, which copies the designs and colors of the old ones.

I have never bought an oriental rug, but if I do, I shall go to the most reliable salesman in the city. In some cases, cheap oriental rugs are bleached, and treated with chemicals, in order to soften the garish colors resulting from aniline dyes, and to give them sheen. Such rugs are likely to wear out quickly. Sometimes this bleaching is so skilfully done that even expert judges are deceived. But there are a few signs that most anybody can recognize. For instance, if cheap, crude dyes have been used, the darker colors generally run into the lighter, making the design blurred. If the rug has been very much bleached, the colors on the surface of the pile will be soft and dull. But if you separate the threads, and look closely at the colors at the base, you will find the colors clear and bright. Sometimes you can tell whether a rug has been bleached by rubbing the surface briskly, with a damp cloth. If it has been bleached, you can detect the odor of chloride of lime. Very often the damp cloth will be stained with the colors of the rug. As a general rule, it is safe to buy oriental rugs only from reliable dealers.

But who am I, to be talking about oriental rugs, when I never owned one in my life? I did go to town, to buy a rug for my dining room, and I looked at every type in the sales room. Then after looking at all the rugs, getting price and so forth, I bought a linoleum, in an attractive marble tile pattern. It will wear for years, and think how easy it is to keep clean.

As you know, there are three general types of linoleum on the market -- plain, inlaid and printed. There's a great deal of wear on my dining room floor, and for that reason I bought the best grade of inlaid linoleum I could afford. Inlaid linoleum is so made that the color in each part of the design extends clear to the backing, and the pattern will last as long as the linoleum itself. Waxing or varnishing is said to improve the appearance of linoleum, and make it last longer. Wax should be used on the inlaid and plain kinds, and varnish on the printed ones, for wax sometimes tends to soften the printed surface. If either of these finishes is applied, the linoleum should be cleaned and cared for like a wood floor, so finished.

If linoleum is not given a wax or varnish finish, it should be swept with a soft brush, and dusted with an oiled or dry mop. Occasionally it should be cleaned more thoroughly, with a cloth wrung out of suds made with lukewarm water and neutral soap. Then it should be rinsed with clear water, and wiped dry with another cloth. Only a small space should be wet at one time. A linoleum-covered floor should never be flooded. Strong soaps and cleaning powders that contain alkali injure linoleum, and should never be used on it. Whenever any kind of cleaning powder is used on a particularly dirty spot, care should be taken to remove any trace of the water, in which the powder was dissolved.

Casters on heavy furniture are likely to cut into the linoleum. I had the casters on my furniture replaced by glass shoes, with wide bearing surfaces, and no rough edges. In moving these heavy pieces of furniture across the linoleum I take the added precaution of placing an old rug or carpet under them.

There's just time enough now for one recipe, a recipe for Peanut Butter and Tomato Soup. Children are particularly fond of this soup, and it's good for them, too. Although you need not tell them that.

Five ingredients, for Peanut Butter and Tomato Soup:

1-1/2 cups tomato juice
1/2 cup peanut butter
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon paprika, and
2-1/2 cups boiling water

Check the five ingredients, for Peanut Butter and Tomato Soup: (Repeat)

Add the tomato juice, gradually, to the peanut butter. When smooth, add the seasonings, and the water. Simmer for 10 minutes, and serve with croutons.

Tomorrow we'll talk about clothes.